

The proposal we had before the Senate was exceedingly reasonable, carefully negotiated, and desperately needed, but Senate Republicans blocked a mere debate on COVID aid, knowing full well of the consequences for the American people. In knowing the consequences, Republicans said no to merely debating more money for booster shots and vaccinations and research into future treatments. In knowing the consequences, Republicans said no to merely debating more testing. In knowing the consequences, Republicans said no to merely debating no less than \$5 billion for lifesaving therapeutics—an indispensable tool for those with COVID illnesses.

And why did Republicans say no?

Because they wanted to cripple COVID funding legislation with poison pills that they knew would derail this bill—would derail the bill. Let me say it again. Instead of joining Democrats to begin a simple debate on COVID legislation, Republicans wanted to kill this bill with unrelated poison pills.

This is potentially devastating for the American people. Vaccines, therapeutics, and testing were negotiated in good faith, and they should not—they should not—be held hostage to extraneous, unrelated issues. This is too important for the health of our country.

The administration, for months, has made clear that new COVID funding is a matter of the highest urgency. Some critical COVID response measures are already being scaled back due to dwindling funding. Their message that Congress had to act—the administration's message—was unmistakable.

I hope Republicans will get serious about this. It should not be so difficult to do something so good and important for our country.

Let me say one other thing.

Our Republican colleagues think they may be gaining some temporary advantage, but God forbid a second variant hits and people ask: Why aren't the vaccines there? Why aren't the therapeutics there? The answer will be that the Senate Republicans, to a person, blocked the ability to move forward and get this legislation done because they wanted to play politics and inject extraneous issues into the debate.

But it is not going to deter us from getting this done. It is vital for keeping schools, churches, business, and other communities open if and when a future, more potent variant rears its ugly head. It is certainly better to act now than to pay the price 10 times down the line. We are going to keep working to make sure that Congress sends COVID funding to the President's desk.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. President, on SCOTUS, the U.S. Senate, happily, wonderfully, is on the brink of completing one of the most important responsibilities entrusted to it under the Constitution: consenting to the President's nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court. As I said, happily and

wonderfully, it will be the first African-American woman to ever serve on that august body.

Any time the Senate elevates someone to the highest pinnacles of the Federal judiciary, the impact literally lasts a lifetime and, often, far beyond that. The men and women who sit on the Supreme Court have the power to render judgment on any question they see fit that comes before them. The consequences of their decisions are seen and felt and reckoned with from here to the farthest corners of our country. So confirming a Supreme Court nominee is, in other words, a big deal to the Senate—one of the biggest deals, in fact. And, before the week is out, the Chamber is set to follow through, once again, on this august and awesome responsibility.

But, of course, even though this is one of the biggest deals for the Senate to do in any situation, it is even a bigger deal now. This time is different. The nominee, the 116th Justice, is different in some important ways than those who came before.

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, like many before her, is brilliant, accomplished, and qualified to be on the Court, but never—never before—has the Supreme Court had a Black woman bear the title of Justice. She will be the first, and I have no doubt, in my mind, that she will pave the way for others in the future.

The exultation among so many who have waited for this moment—of young girls throughout America who may say, "I can do this, too"; the untapped potential even for young people, particularly women of color, who are not interested in the law or in the Supreme Court but who say, "I can go somewhere; I can do something; I can get there"—is going to be great for America.

There are many considerations that the Senate should ponder when we are faced with the question of confirming judges. Diversity and representation is certainly one of them. It is a key feature of a healthy and vibrant democracy. When Americans of all walks of life come before the court, of course they should have confidence that those who don the robes have the ability to walk in their own shoes—to see and understand their sides of the story.

That is why diversity of background and experience has been one of the most important priorities in the Senate as we have confirmed the President's judges, and over the last year, as has been noted, we have made incredible progress on that front.

Of the 58 Senate-confirmed judges, three-quarters have been women, and two-thirds have been people of color. To be clear, these judges are diverse not just through their backgrounds but in their experiences. More public defenders, more civil rights attorneys, more nonprofit lawyers have been added to the Federal bench.

After years of the previous administration's confirming judges who were

disproportionately White, disproportionately male, disproportionately from big law firms, Senate Democrats are working to bring balance back to our judiciary. It will make our democracy healthier, fairer, and stronger.

As the country grows increasingly diverse in this century, Judge Jackson's confirmation will be a major step toward achieving that goal, and I so look forward to finishing the work to confirm this most qualified, most deserving, most historic nominee.

RUSSIA

Mr. President, finally, as Russia's war in Ukraine reaches an abominable level of brutality—you see these pictures of the people, innocent civilians who were shot—young, old, children, men, women—every single American should unite on the side of the Ukrainian people and against Putin's indiscriminate violence.

The pictures we have seen coming out of Ukraine and coming out of the town of Bucha are a pure manifestation of evil, hundreds of civilians murdered in cold blood—men, women, children, the elderly, the defenseless, people who were tied with their hands behind their backs, clearly civilians, shot in the back of the head because they are Ukrainians. It is the only reason. It is a genocide. It was called a genocide today by a Ukrainian official. It is a genocide. When these people are shot simply because of their nationality—they don't have arms—that is genocide, especially when it occurs in the large numbers it has already, individuals trying to live their own lives, targeted to be killed because of their nationality.

Putin is a war criminal. When Putin says Ukraine and Russia are together after he did this, no Ukrainian is ever going to believe it. Even the isolated Putin must know that, but he is cornered. And so he is a war criminal.

Any nation that indiscriminately and intentionally targets civilians should not enjoy doing business with American companies. But, shamefully, Koch Industries is continuing to do business in Putin's Russia and putting their profits ahead of defending democracy.

There is an explosive report this morning that the Koch political arm is now pushing for the United States to abandon our allies and back off the hard-hitting sanctions the Biden administration has imposed on Russia. The Kochs are selling out democracy for their own profits.

Every Senator—Democrat, Republican—we all care about Ukraine. Every Senator needs to condemn this push by the Koch brothers and call on Koch Industries to immediately suspend their operations in Russia. I look forward to every tough-talking Senate Republican to come here to the floor and call out the Koch brothers for undermining America's resolve against Putin's illegal, unprovoked, and criminal invasion of Ukraine.

Senate Democrats are working on legislation to add Russia to existing